

## Carol Coles

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**From:** Carol Coles  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 03, 2009 1:44 PM  
**To:** \*everyone; \_Council Members; Andy Rieger; Denise Holder; Eddie Sims; Jane Cannon; KGOU; KOCO; KOKH; Ktok; KTOK; Norman News; Oklahoma Daily  
**Subject:** Christmas Tree Safety

City of Norman  
 201 West Gray  
 Norman, Oklahoma 73069

Press Release

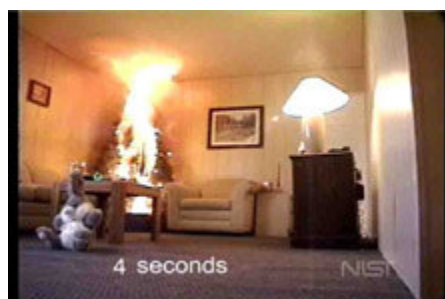
For Immediate Release

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Christmas Tree Safety

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Christmas is near and that means presents under the tree, this tree can be a great source of joy but can also be a great danger if not cared for properly. Carefully decorating Christmas trees can help make your holidays safer.



### **Facts & Figures**

- Christmas trees are the items first ignited in an estimated average of 310 reported U.S home structure fires per year. These fires caused an average of 14 civilian deaths, 40 civilian injuries, and \$16.2 million in direct property damage per year. These statistics include both real and artificial trees.
- On average, one in every 22 reported home Christmas tree fires resulted in a death.
- More than four of every ten home Christmas tree fires are caused by an electrical problem or malfunction. One in four (24%) home Christmas tree fires resulted from a heat source placed too close to the tree. Seven percent were started by children playing with fire.  
 When equipment was involved in the ignition of the fire, Lamps, Bulbs or Lighting (18%), and Cords or

Plugs (13%) were cited more often than any other type of equipment. No equipment was involved in 44% of these fires.

- Candles were the heat source in 8% of the home Christmas tree fires per year.
- Sixty-one percent of the home Christmas tree fires were reported in December, 22% were reported in January. Not surprisingly, the number of these fires spikes during the week of December 22-28.

These statistics are based on fires that started with Christmas trees and do not include fires starting with other products. A small fire that spreads to a Christmas tree can very quickly become large.

### **Safety Tips**

- When decorating Christmas trees, always use safe tree lights. (Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.) Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb and all lights should be listed by a testing laboratory.  
Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.
- Check your strands of lights to determine the number of strands that may be connected. Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and extend their life.
- Never use lit candles to decorate a tree, and place them well away from tree branches.
- Try to keep live trees as moist as possible by giving them plenty of water daily. Do not purchase a tree that is dry or dropping needles.  
When purchasing a live or cut tree, check for fresh, green needles
- Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- Children are fascinated with Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around the tree and do not let them play with the wiring or lights.
- Store matches and lighters up high, out of the reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet (one meter) away from any heat source, such as fireplaces and radiators. Try to position the tree near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances. Do not place the tree where it may block exits.
- Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.

Please use these tips as we enter this holiday season, with a little care and safety we can help keep someone we know or love from being harmed by fire which could have been prevented. The Norman Fire Department would like to wish everyone a safe and merry Christmas.